The Kingdom of Van (Urartu)

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I. Geography: The Inscriptions

THE Vannic kingdom, which had its capital on the southeastern shore of Lake Van, played a conspicuous part in the politics and history of western Asia in the age of the Later Assyrian Empire (see pp. 19sqq.). On the one hand it checked the southward inrush of the semi-civilized tribes of the north; on the other it was for a while the mainstay and rallying-point of the nations of Armenia and eastern Asia Minor in their struggle with Assyria. In spite of Assyrian victories, it never lost its independence, and the Assyrians never obtained possession of the coveted metal-mines of the Taurus which had once been worked by Babylonians in the second millennium before our era.

The original seat of the kingdom was on the eastern and southeastern shores of Lake Van, though conquest extended it to Lake Gökcheh (or Sewan) and Alexandropol beyond the Araxes on the north, and to the banks of the Euphrates on the west, while its armies made their way eastward as far as Rowanduz and the sources of the Zab. It thus occupied the larger part of Armenia, the frontier city on the Assyrian side being Uaisis, the modern Bitlis. Eastward, on the southern shores of Lake Urmia, were the Manna, the Minni of the Old Testament, and the land of Parsuas; westward of them, according to Thureau-Dangin, came the petty state of Musasir, called Ardinis, 'the city of the Sun-god,' in the Vannic inscriptions, which at one time was a dependency of Van.

The Vannic kingdom was known as Urartu to the Assyrians and Babylonians, Ararat in Hebrew. An early Babylonian 'tourist's' map places the city of Ura-Urtu north of Assyria, and a lexical tablet informs us that Urtu corresponded with Tilla 'the Highlands.' In the Assyrian version of the inscription of Rusas at Topzawa, accordingly, the country is named Urtu.

The city of Van was probably founded by Sarduris I about 840 B.C. It was, at any rate, under him that it became the capital of the kingdom. He was the builder of the citadel, which was further fortified by his successors, while his grandson, Menuas, added to it a garden-city. The site was well chosen; on the [170] southern side, whence attacks on the part of Assyria were to be feared, the rock on which it stood was well-

nigh impregnable; on the northern side was the lake where a fleet could lie and secure a supply of provisions. The city stood in the province of Biainas or Bianas; its own name, however, was Tuspas, Tosp in Moses of Khorene and Turuspa in Assyrian. Bianas, 'the town of Bia,' written Byana by Ptolemy, is now pronounced Van.

The name, therefore, under which the kingdom and its language are generally known, is peculiarly appropriate. It commits us to no theories as to the origin or relationship of the people and expresses the geographical facts. Moreover, most of the inscriptions recording the history of the country have been discovered in Van or its immediate neighbourhood. Another title, however, has been proposed, that of 'Khaldian,' on the ground that in the inscriptions the people are called 'the children of Khaldis,' the supreme god. The name survived, it has been urged, among the Khalybes, who are also called 'Chaldaeans,' and a mediaeval province of Khaldia extended along the coast of the Black Sea from Batum to Trebizond. But there was no connection between the Black Sea and Lake Van in the age of the inscriptions; different languages were spoken, and the territories of the Vannic kings never stretched so far to the north. On the other hand, the name of Ararat has been preserved in that of the Alarodians of Herodotus, so that, if another title is wanted in place of Vannic, Alarodian would be preferable to Khaldian.

The French scholar, Saint-Martin, as far back as 1823, drew attention to the references made by Moses of Khorene, the Armenian historian, to the antiquities of his country, and concluded that inscriptions as well as early architectural remains were to be found there. At his instigation, a young German Fr. E. Schulz, was consequently sent to Armenia by the French Government in 1826, with the result that many cuneiform inscriptions were discovered in Van and its vicinity. A preliminary report of his discoveries was published by Saint-Martin in 1828; the following year Schulz was murdered at Julamerk in Kurdistan together with several Persian officers. His papers, however, were subsequently recovered, and his copies of forty-two cuneiform inscriptions published in the *Journal Asiatique* in 1840. They have proved to be astonishingly accurate. [The *Journal Asiatique* article is available for download here.] Three of them (IX, X and XI) turned out to belong to the Persian period; with the exception of a short one in Assyrian, the rest were in an unknown language.

[171] Two inscriptions in the same language were discovered soon afterwards on the bank of the Euphrates (at Isoglu and Palu), and in 1847 an attempt to read the 'Vannic ' texts was made by Edward Hincks. The Persian cuneiform texts had now been practically deciphered and a beginning had been made with their Babylonian transcripts. Hincks pointed out that the forms of the characters employed at Van resembled the Assyro-Babylonian, and he succeeded in reading with fair exactitude the names of some of the kings, as well as detecting certain 'determinatives', (such as 'city') and fixing the signification of one or two words.

In 1850 Sir A. H. Layard visited Armenia and made copies of the numerous inscriptions he found there. A considerable proportion of these remained unpublished in the British Museum until they were edited by the present writer in 1882, along with squeezes of other inscriptions subsequently taken by Hormuzd Rassam. Meanwhile similar inscriptions had been found by Rawlinson and other travellers in the Rowanduz district, and additions to the collection were made by Blau, Hyvernat and many others. The exploring expeditions despatched by the Imperial Archaeological Society of Moscow added largely to the list and have been published by Nikolsky and Golénischeff, while Armenian scholars have brought some fresh texts to light. The largest and most complete collection of new texts, however, was that made by W. Belck and C. F. Lehmann-Haupt at the instance of Virchow in 1898-9. Unfortunately very few of these have been published. Belck had already discovered several inscriptions in an earlier expedition in 1891.

The task of deciphering them had been taken up by Francois Lenormant in 1871, and A. D. Mordtmann in 1872. Lenormant pushed the decipherment a little beyond Hincks, and Mordtmann settled the meaning of several words. But his imperfect knowledge of Assyrian prevented him from advancing further, and the problem without the help of a bilingual text was pronounced to be insuperable. In 1880, however, the French

scholar, Stanislas Guyard, announced a discovery which threw a new light on the subject. This was the fact that a phrase frequently met with at the end of the inscriptions represents the imprecatory formula found in the same place in the inscriptions of Assyria. The present writer also had been working at the Vannic texts, and had independently arrived at the same conclusion, based in his case upon the interchange of phonetically written words in one text with ideographs, the meaning of which was known to us, in another.

[172] Certain of these ideographs are 'determinatives,' determining, that is to say, the class of word to which they are attached. In this way it became possible to break up a text into its component elements, to discover and set apart the names of men, women, countries, deities, and the like, or words like 'ox,' 'sheep,' 'stone,' and so to arrive at its general sense. When once this had been done the grammatical forms could be ascertained and fixed. In several cases, moreover, a word was replaced in a parallel passage by an ideograph of which the signification was known. The net result was to show that the cuneiform system of writing must have been introduced into Armenia from Assyria in the age ot the Assyrian king Ashur-nasir-pal, and that the historical inscriptions of the Vannic kings were modelled after those of the kings of Assyria. This was a further aid to the process of decipherment, since whole sentences proved to have been translated or paraphrased from Assyrian prototypes. In 1882 the present writer's memoir on 'The Cuneiform Inscriptions of Van' was published in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*. In this he settled for the first time the geography and date of the inscriptions, as well as the geographical position of the Manna who had previously been located at Van, and followed this up with a grammar and vocabulary, of the newly-deciphered language and with copies of all known inscriptions along with interlinear translations, introductions and notes. [The *JRAS* article is available for download here.] Stanislas Guyard in Paris, D. H. Muller in Vienna and Patkanoff in St. Petersburg sent their congratulations with numerous corrections and additions to his memoir. From this time onward fresh inscriptions came to light which the writer communicated to the Royal Asiatic Society, and eventually two bilingual (Vannic and Assyrian) texts were discovered, erected by Ispuinis at Kelishin and Rusas at Topzawa, which verified the decipherment, corrected a few details, and made important additions to our knowledge of the vocabulary. Since then Belck, Lehmann-Haupt and Nikolsky have carried on the work, more especially on its historical side.

The Vannic language is of the Asianic type, perhaps distantly related to Georgian. It displays, however, no connection with Mitannian on the one hand or with the Hittite languages on the other. After the seventh century B.C. it disappears; when Armenia again emerges into view under the Persian kings, its old language has been displaced by an Indo-European one, the proper names have also become Indo-European, including even the names of the cities. In this latter respect it differs from England after the [173] Saxon conquest. While, however, there has been a complete change of language, the general racial type has remained unaltered. The typical Armenian of to-day is, on the physical side, what his ancestors were in the age of the Vannic kingdom. Broad-skulled, with black hair and eyes, large and protrusive nose and somewhat retreating chin, he represents that 'Armenoid ' type which extends throughout Asia Minor, embraces a section of the Jews, and is characteristic of the Hittite monuments. It is evident that the invaders who introduced the Armenian language of to-day could have been but a small caste of conquerors who have long since been absorbed by the older population of the country. Languages change readily; racial types are extraordinarily permanent.

II. Early History to c. 720 B.C.

The very existence of the Vannic kingdom was unknown and unsuspected before the decipherment of the cuneiform texts. There are references to it in the Assyrian annals (see pp. 19 sqq., 26 sqq.), the most important of which is Sargon's history of his campaign against Musasir, first published and translated by Thureau-Dangin (see pp. 51 sqq., 56), but the greater part of our information is derived from the native monuments. These begin with inscriptions in the Assyrian language belonging to Sarduris son of Lutipris, and

recording the construction of the citadel of Van with stones from the city of Alniun. He calls himself 'king of the world' and 'king of kings,' as well as 'king of Nairi,' the name under which the 'Riverland' of the north was known to the Assyrians, and we must accordingly see in him the founder of Van and the Vannic empire. In 831 B.C. he was defeated by the general of the Assyrian king Shalmaneser III, who entitles him 'king of Ararat' (p. 24). A few years previously, in 859 and 855 B.C., the 'king of Ararat,' [The more familiar Ararat is used in this chapter for Urartu] who was Shalmaneser's antagonist, had been Arame, whose capital was Arzaskun on the northern shore of Lake Van (p. 20 sq.). The imperial titles assumed by Sarduris, therefore, as well as his selection of a new capital, which henceforth remained the centre of the kingdom, make it probable that he was the founder of a new dynasty, Arame having been one of the 'kings' of whom he claimed to be overlord.

The next king whose monuments are found at Van is Ispuinis, 'the establisher,' the son of Sarduris. There is no reason for thinking that this Sarduris was not identical with the son of [174] Lutipris; the continuity of the epigraphic and architectural monuments of Van, in fact, is against such a supposition. He introduced the use of the native language instead of Assyrian into the inscriptions; tentatively at first, however, since the record of his victories and prowess which he erected in the pass of Kelishin (between Rowanduz and Ushnei), was written in Assyrian as well as Vannic. But it was he who first established the empire and carried his arms as far east as Rowanduz and he therefore felt justified in placing his new dominion on a level with Assyria. Before his death he associated his son Menuas with himself on the throne, and the Kelishin inscription was drawn up in their joint names. In this the Assyrian title 'king of Nairi,' still takes the place of the native title 'king of Biainas.' Musasir, called Ardinis, 'the city of the Sun-god,' by its Vannic conquerors, had already been annexed to the Vannic kingdom; temples were erected in it by the two Vannic sovereigns and sacrifices offered on a sumptuous scale to the supreme god Khaldis.

Menuas imitated the action of his father by associating his own son Inuspuas in the sovereignty. He seems to have been one of the ablest, and was certainly one of the most successful, of the Vannic monarchs, and the number of his monuments and the extent to which they are scattered over the country imply a long reign. Inuspuas could have been his associate only at the beginning of his reign, since an inscription ascribes the rebuilding of a ruined portion of the citadel at Van to the joint labours of Ispuinis, Inuspuas and himself, and after the death of Ispuinis the name of Inuspuas is recorded in only one other text.

Parsuas had already been attacked by Ispuinis, and Menuas now proceeded to subdue the Manna, farther east, on the southern side of Lake Urmia. Here at Tashtepe, near Mianduab, called Mesta by Menuas, an inscription was set up celebrating his victories. Later on in the same year he led an expedition against the Hittites in the north-west, capturing some of their cities and penetrating into the land of Alzi at the sources of the Euphrates. Before his reign was ended, he had subjugated the 'country of Diaus,' the Dayaeni of the Assyrians, on the Murad Chai, not far from Melazgert (Menuasgert) to which he conducted a canal.

The Euphrates was made the western boundary of the empire and here at Palu Menuas engraved an inscription on the cliff recording his march through the country of the Hittites and his conquest of Milid (Malatiah, Melitene). The king of Malatiah [175] was made tributary and relations established with the peoples of Asia Minor which were to issue in later days in the league of the northern nations against the Assyrian menace. Northward the Vannic armies made their way to Erzerum, as is shown by an inscription of Menuas found in a neighbouring town, and the country of Etius north of the Araxes was overrun. From this time forward the district between the Araxes and Mount Ararat formed part of the Vannic kingdom.

Victories abroad were accompanied by building operations at home. Menuas was the founder of the garden-city of Van which extended to the Lake and was made possible by the construction of a large and important canal, now known as the Shamiram Su, which was cut through the rock and brought through Artemid. Other canals were cut in various parts of the country, at Bergri north-east of the Lake, at the city of Kera, the

modern Arjish, at Melazgert and Ada, and elsewhere. Melazgert itself was re-built, Arjish founded, and we hear of the building or restoration of numerous temples, palaces and forts all over the kingdom.

The Assyrian king, Shamshi-Adad V (p. 26 sq.), states that in his second campaign his general penetrated as far as the Lake of Van, capturing on his way 200 cities belonging to Uspina. Uspina is evidently Ispuinis, and we may therefore place the accession of Menuas about 810 B.C. [So Lehmann-Haupt.]

Argistis I, the son of Menuas, was a worthy successor of his father. The record of his campaigns is inscribed on the rock of Van, where he added largely to the fortifications of the citadel, and we may see in it the prototype of the great inscription of Darius on the rock of Behistun. Year after year the Vannic armies went forth and returned with the prisoners and spoil that were employed in the construction of the public works. Fourteen campaigns are recorded, which resulted in establishing Vannic rule in Etius and Dayaeni beyond Melazgert and the Araxes. South of that river, the country had now become an integral part of the Vannic kingdom, and the foundation of the city of Armavir by Argistis was a standing witness of the fact. The inscriptions of the Vannic conqueror are found as far north as Alexandropol and the road between Kars and Erzerum.

At least one campaign was directed against the Hittites and Malatiah. But it was in the east that the activities of Argistis were greatest. Here in the lands of Parsuas and the Minni (Manna) on the shores of Lake Urmia he found himself threatened by the Assyrians, and here, accordingly, a large part of his military [176] operations took place. Most of the reign of the Assyrian king Shalmaneser IV (782-772) was occupied in wars with Ararat, and the annals of Argistis show where the field of battle must have lain. Assyria was then temporarily in a decadent condition, and the rise of the new power in the north was a serious menace to it. (See p. 29 sq.)

Argistis I was succeeded by his son Sarduris II. Under him the Vannic kingdom or rather empire reached its furthest limits. Near Isoglu (or Izoty) he engraved an inscription on a rock over- looking the Euphrates in which he describes his invasion of Malatiah and the capture of its cities. There was as yet no league or common policy between Van and.the Hittite peoples of Cappadocia. That was to come later, when the new Assyria had arisen and threatened the independence of both.

Meanwhile Sarduris could boast of his victories over Ashur-nirari V, the Assyrian king (754-745 B.C.). Assyria was seething with insurrection. Ashur, the ancient capital of the country, had broken away from Nineveh along with other cities, and civil war was still intermittently raging there. Sarduris could consolidate his power in the north without hindrance, could exact tribute from the tribes beyond the Araxes and become the predominant power in northern Syria. Then came the change. A revolution overthrew the old Assyrian dynasty, and a military dictator named Pul made himself master of the state, under the title of Tiglath-pileser III (745 B.C.). Attempts at revolt were mercilessly suppressed, the government of the country was centralized at Nineveh, and the army reorganized and made the most perfect fighting instrument in the world. A punitive expedition put a stop to Kurdish raids and the Babylonian frontier was secured. Mesopotamia was occupied by the Assyrian troops, and the Euphrates crossed with the fixed intention of annexing Syria and so gaining command of the high-road of commerce to the sea. This brought the Assyrian armies within what had now become the Vannic sphere of influence (see p. 34 sq.). In 743 B.C. the clash came. Tiglath-pileser laid siege to Arpad, the key to northern Syria. Sarduris hurried at once to the rescue and along with the Syrian forces attacked the enemy. A common peril had made the northern princes forget their own rivalries and unite against the common foe under the leadership of the premier power in the north. In the train of Sarduris was his erstwhile antagonist, the king of Malatiah, as well as Kustaspi, king of Kumukh (Commagene), whom a recently discovered text, the longest yet known, and computed by Belck to have consisted of more than 500 lines, tells us had been conquered by the Vannic king in an earlier part of his reign. But the allies were no match for the newly-trained and newly-armed forces of Tiglath-pileser; they were driven northward, and finally, near Kishtan and Khalpi in Commagene, were signally defeated and pursued as far as the bridge over

the Euphrates, which marked the boundary of the Vannic kingdom. The Assyrian king claims to have captured the state carriage and chariot of Sarduris, his palanquin and royal necklace, 72,950 soldiers and an enormous spoil. From henceforward Syria was lost to Ararat.

A few years later, in 736 B.C., Tiglath-pileser determined to carry the war into Armenia itself. The Vannic forces were crushed, and city after city fell into the hands of the Assyrians and was ruthlessly destroyed. The Assyrian army eventually appeared at the gates of the capital. But Sarduris had shut himself up in his citadel which proved impregnable, and Tiglath-pileser was compelled to content himself with destroying the city at its foot, massacring its inhabitants and erecting a statue of himself in full face of his enemy's fortress. Then he ravaged the country over a space of 450 miles, and returned to Nineveh, leaving ruins and desolation behind him, while Van was rendered powerless, at all events for a time.

Sarduris must have died shortly afterwards and was followed by his 'son' Uedipris, who took the name of Rusas, written Ursa in the Assyrian texts. Such, at least, is the natural inference from the native inscriptions. But the long inscription of Sargon in which he describes the capture and sack of Musasir creates a difficulty. Here, the Assyrian monarch seems to emphasise the fact that Sarduris and Rusas belonged to different families. On his way to Musasir two of the towns he destroyed, so Sargon tells us, were 'Arbu the city of the house of his (*i.e*. Rusas') father and Riar the city of Sarduris' (line 277). After the capture of Musasir, moreover, three royal statues are described in the enumeration of the booty, one of them, it is stated, being a statue of 'Sarduris son of Ispuinis,' which was inscribed with a prayer for the continuance of his sovereignty, while another represented Rusas with his two horses and driver and 'the vainglorious' inscription: 'With my two horses and a driver my hands have obtained the sovereignty of Ararat.' The inscription, however, resembles those which Greek travellers discovered on the monuments of foreign princes, the image of Sardanapalus at Tarsus, for example, or that of the pseudo-Sesostris near Smyrna, and is [178] totally unlike anything we find in the Vannic texts themselves. Nor would a Vannic king have spoken of the 'sovereignty of Ararat': that was purely Assyrian. No historical inference, therefore, can be derived from the Assyrian scribe's pretended translation of the epigraph, much less the supposition that Rusas had conquered Biainas by force of arms. How little acquainted with Vannic history the scribe must have been is shown by his statement that Sarduris was the son of Ispuinis.

Nor can the assertion that Rusas and Sarduris came from different cities be pressed too far, since Sargon adds that there were seven other towns 'surrounding them inhabited by his brothers of the seed royal.' It is evident that each brother had a separate city assigned to him, but that along with Rusas and Sarduris they all alike belonged to 'the seed royal.' In other words, Sarduris had eight sons, the eldest of whom may have been Uedipris who took the name of Rusas. This assumption of a new name on mounting the throne appears to have been a fashion of the time; Tiglath-pileser was originally Pul, his successor Shalmaneser V was Ululai, and the present writer argued many years ago that Sargon had borne the name of Yarib (Hosea v, 13), while inscriptions tell us that Esarhaddon had the further name of Ashur-etil-ilani-mukin-apli. Where there was a doubt about the legitimacy of the title the adoption of the name of an earlier king, famous in history, was an attractive device, and it is possible that Uedipris was not the immediate heir of his father in the line of succession. Indeed he may have been a son by adoption or by an inferior wife.

III. Later History, from c. 720 B.C.

The military troubles which followed the death of Tiglath-pileser enabled the Vannic kingdom to recover to a certain extent from the effects of that monarch's campaign in the north. An inscription left by Rusas on a rock overhanging Lake Gökchheh [Sevan] describes how he had brought into subjection twenty-three kings, called *ipani*' in that part of the world, in the region between Erivan and Tiflis. We learn from Sargon that he had

wrenched from the Minni the district of Uisdis with its grain-cities 'which were as numberless as the stars of heaven,' though it is possible that the acquisition of this territory was part of the price paid by the Minni for assistance against Assyria. Even in northern Syria Vannic influence revived (see p. 51 sqq.).

But it was clear that respite from the Assyrian danger could [179] not last long. The Assyrian army was as formidable as ever, and it was certain that with the appearance of a strong leader and the suppression of internal disputes another assault would be made upon Armenia. Rusas, therefore, busied himself in forming a league of the northern nations along with Mita (or Midas) of the Mushki who were now the predominant power in eastern Asia Minor (see pp. 145, 166). The northern alliance, however, was ill-compacted, and Rusas and Mita do not seem to have worked heartily together. The country, moreover, was mountainous and difficult to traverse, so that intercourse and rapid action in common were by no means easy. Sargon was allowed to strike at his opponents in detail; first Carchemish, the head of the league in Syria, fell (in 717 B.C.), and so the passage over the Euphrates passed under Assyrian control. Instead of uniting, his enemies now divided their forces; while Mita headed the confederates on the western side of the Euphrates, Rusas threw all his forces into the lands of the Minni to the east. But the Minni resembled the Kurds of to-day. They had no political cohesion and their army was a rabble of bandits. Sargon had little difficulty therefore in crushing them (in 715 B.C.). When he turned westward to Mita, and with the Syrian resources behind him drove the enemy beyond the Taurus. He was now free to attack Rusas in his stronghold at Van.

The Armenian campaign occurred in 714 B.C. The Vannic army was completely defeated in the Minnian province of Uisdis in the gorge of Mount Uaus which Thureau-Dangin identifies with Mount Sahend east of Lake Urmia. At Uskaia the Assyrian troops entered the Vannic kingdom. The relics of the Vannic forces had fled to Van along with their king, while the unarmed inhabitants found a refuge in the mountains or were massacred helplessly by the invaders. The towns and villages were burned and Sargon finally found himself at the northern point of Lake Van and so reached Uaisis (Bitlis) on the Assyrian frontier. But the fortress proved too strong to be taken, and the conqueror, after receiving the tribute of Khubushkia (the modern Sart), suddenly determined to make a forced march backwards through a country without roads to the city of Musasir where Rusas had deposited all his treasures. It was a bold determination; the place was reputed inaccessible to an invading army, and the slightest attempt at blocking the road on the part of its defenders would have meant destruction to the invaders more especially on their returning road. But Sargon trusted to the suddenness and unexpectedness of his manreuvre as well as to the disorganization of [180] the Vannic forces, and he knew that untold wealth awaited him if the expedition proved a success.

His account of it, which takes the form of a letter to the god Ashur, describes the stages of the march and its successful issue. Musasir was reached without opposition, its vassal kinglet, Urzana, fled, leaving his wives and family to the mercy of the conqueror. The unfortunate townspeople crowded the roofs of their houses weeping and begging their lives from the conqueror, or else crawling before him in the dust on their hands and feet. The temple of Khaldis, the god of Biainas, was demolished, and an immense spoil carried away from both temple and palace. Line after line of the inscription is occupied with an enumeration of it. Gold and silver, precious woods and stones, ivory and rich furniture, fell into the hands of the Assyrian. Among the numberless vessels of gold and silver were 'the silver cup of Rusas with its cover', 'cups from the land of Tabal,' and silver censers from the same country. There were bronze and iron objects of all kinds and sizes, and dyed vestments of linen, including the scarlet textiles of 'Ararat and Kurkhi.' From the temple-treasury were taken talents of gold, of silver and of copper, a great sword of gold, as well as lances, bows and arrows of silver inlaid with gold, chariots of silver and 393 silver cups 'the workmanship of Assyria, Ararat and Kurkhi,' daggers of ivory and hard wood set in gold, ivory tables and baskets for holding flowers together with 139 ivory wands. The shields of gold, which hung three on either side of the temple-door were torn down from the walls, and the conquerors carried away the golden bar moulded in the form of an *abubu* or Flood-dragon, seated on a human hand, which closed the door, along with the two golden keys that were fashioned in the likeness of protecting goddesses with the Hittite tiara on their heads. Among the other spoils

of the temple were twelve silver shields adorned with heads of lions and wild oxen and also the *abubu*—a curious parallel to the Flood-dragon of China—as well as the gold ring which 'confirmed the commands of Bagmastu, the wife of Khaldisddd' and special goddess of Musasir, and the ivory bed with silver mattress on which the divine pair were believed to lie. Images of the Vannic kings also fell into Sargon's hands, as also 'a great bowl of bronze capable of holding eighty measures of water, with its great bronze cover, which the kings of Ararat filled with wine for libations when they offered sacrifice to Khaldis.'

Sargon declares that when the news of the loss of his treasure and the captivity of his god reached the Vannic king, he was [181] overwhelmed by the greatness of the disaster and committed suicide by running a sword through his body (see p. 53). The statement cannot be correct if the bilingual inscription set up by Rusas at Sidikan-Topzawa belongs to a later period than the destruction of Musasir, as has been suggested. But the text of the inscription really implies the contrary. It describes the installation of Urzana as vassal king of Musasir and accordingly must belong to an earlier period in the Assyrian war. Rusas states that the Vannic troops had penetrated as far as 'the mountains of Assyria' on the north-east of the Assyrian kingdom and that on their way back to Van he had established Urzana at Musasir to keep watch upon the enemy. The installation of Urzana took place in the temple of Khaldis which was still standing.

Rusas I was probably the Rusas of the mutilated stele of Keshish Göl, near Van, which describes various public works carried out by the king, more especially the formation of a reservoir at the source of the Keshish G&oml;l, the construction of a canal, and the creation of a new garden-city named Rusakhinas, 'the city of Rusas,' on the east side of the rock of Van with its vineyards and palace. The transference of the garden city from its old site on the south side of the citadel was probably due to the fact that the new town was protected by the fortress of Toprak Kaleh. The canal dug by Menuas was consequently no longer serviceable, and another canal was required. It will be remembered that the lower town of Van had been destroyed by Tiglath-pileser.

Rusas I was succeeded in 714 B.C. by his son Argistis II. The capture of Musasir by Sargon and the loss of the royal treasure was a disaster from which the Vannic kingdom never recovered (p. 59). During the rest of Sargon's reign it remained quiescent so far as Assyria was concerned, and it is only after the accession of Sennacherib that we hear of it again. But Assyria had no reason to congratulate itself. In the districts south of Lake Urmia, it is true, no further trouble was to be feared, but the kingdom of Biainas had served as a buffer-state protecting Assyria from the attack of the northern hordes. And this service it was no longer strong enough to perform, Scyths (Ashguzai) and Cimmerians (Gimirrai) poured down from the north to the right and the left of the Vannic state, and the Phrygian tribes, who were eventually to become the Armenians, were already advancing from the west. The Cimmerians had now reached Lydia, since Esarhaddon associated Saparda or Sardes with them as well as with the Scyths and Medes. (See pp. 83, 188.)

[182] In their own immediate territory, however, the kings of Tuspas still maintaned their authority. A letter of Sennacherlb, when he was crown-prince, informs us that a 'Gurania (the modern Gurun on the Tokhma-su), Nagiu, the fortresses of Ararat and the fortresses of Gamir were paying tribute to Ararat,' 'But when the men of Ararat went to Gamir they were defeated.' In Gamir we may see the name of the Cimmerians, the Gomer of the book of Genesis. Later on we hear that 'Uesi,' that is Bitlis, had been occupied by the generals of the king of Ararat—Seteni of Ararat, Suna of the Ukka, Sakuata of Kanium, Siblia of Alzi (on the Arsanias) and Tutu of Armiraliu—and a despatch from the governor of Amida (Diarbekr) to Sennacherib mentions Argistis and states that the Assyrian cities had to be carefully garrisoned up to the frontier of the Vannic kingdom.

The son and successor of Argistis was Rusas II. In an inscription discovered by Belck and Lehmann-Haupt at Adeljevas on the north side of the Lake of Van he claims to have conquered the Mushki, the Hittites and the Khalitu[ni] or Halizones, and another inscription found near Melazgert, between Erzingan and Kharput, refers to his occupation of Alzi. Among the Minni, also, his authority was recognized, according to a tablet from the

son of a prince in that part of the world who had sent a number of workmen and others to Van, to assist in the building operations Rusas had undertaken at the temple of Toprak Kaleh. The Cimmerian danger was now past: they and their leader Teushpa had been defeated by Esarhaddon in Khubushkia (Sart) and driven westward into Asia Minor. But it would seem that the common peril had brought Van and Assyria together, and we find Rusas, accordingly, sending ambassadors to Ashurbanipal to congratulate him on his victory over the Elamites. A few years later, after the Arabian campaign of Ashurbanipal, another embassy arrived at the Assyrian court from Ararat, sent this time by Sarduris III, who appears to have been a son of Rusas. At all events, Ashurbanipal informs us that his 'royal fathers' had made alliance with the 'royal fathers' of the Assyrian king, which implies descent from the ancient royal house of Biainas (see also p. 118). Another Sarduris has left a memorial of himself on the southern shore of Lake Erivan, who calls himself the son of Rapis. But he does not entitle himself king of Biainas or Tuspas, and is therefore probably to be regarded as some dependent prince whose territory lay in the north, and who was possibly a cadet of the royal house. On the other hand, various bronze objects—shields, libation-bowls, human-headed bulls and the model of a palace—discovered [183] at Toprak Kaleh, record the building activities there of a king Rusas, the son of Erimenas. The relics seem to belong to the last period of restoration or construction in the garden-city, and the present writer therefore adheres to his old belief that we must see in them the latest literary records of the Vannic kingdom that have survived. Erimenas would have been the successor of Sarduris III.

The kingdom of Ararat was still existing when Jeremiah, chapter li, was written. There the kingdoms of Ararat, Minni (i.e. Mannai) and Ashkenaz are called upon to assist the Medes in the destruction of Babylon. Cyrus the Persian has not yet loomed upon the scene; the Medes still hold the place subsequently occupied by Persia in the history of western Asia. The date of the prophecy, consequently, will be before 550 B.C.

When the curtain rises again, Biainis has become Armenia. The Vannic language has been replaced by an Indo-European one, and the cities bear new names. The war carried on by Darius against the Medic pretender was partly fought in Armenia, and Strabo tells us that the descendants of Hydarnes, one of the seven conspirators against the Magian, became kings of Armenia, and reigned there from the time of Darius Hystaspis to that of Alexander. The next cuneiform inscription to those of the old Vannic monarchs that is found there was engraved by Xerxes on the rock of Van. Over the interval which lies between them hangs the same veil of darkness as that which separates Roman Britain from the England of Christian Saxondom. All we know is that in 609 B.C., after the overthrow of Assyria by the Medes and Babylonians, the conquerors marched against the old capital of the Vannic kingdom.

IV. Religion and Culture

The supreme god of Biainas was Khaldis, whose people and children its inhabitants believed themselves to be. Under the influence of Babylonian culture Khaldis came to be associated with two other gods, Ardinis the Sun-god and Teisbas, and so to form a trinity like that of Babylonia. Teisbas, the Tessubas (Teshub) of the Hittite monuments, was probably borrowed from abroad, and corresponded with the Hadad-Rimmon of Syria. Hittite religion was very hospitable, so long as the foreign deities who were admitted into it acknowledged the supremacy and fatherhood of Khaldis. Ishtar, for example, was introduced under the name of Saris and in the disguise of Semiramis played a [184] prominent part in the legends of the later Armenia. The joint kings, Ispuinis and Menuas, engraved a long inscription on the rocks of Meher-Kapussi, two miles from Van, containing a tariff of the sacrifices and offerings that were to be made to the various deities of the kingdom. Among them are the deities of conquered countries, and there are others like Tuspuas who, as in Asia Minor, were deified cities. Along with Selardis, the Moon, 'Water' and 'Earth' are also mentioned, from which we may gather that worship was offered to rivers and springs. The 'Khaldis-gods,' that is to say, the family of Khaldis, were very numerous; and it is therefore curious that like Ashur in Assyria no consort is assigned to him except at Musasir, where it is the foreign goddess Bagmastu. At Van itself the goddess Ishtar, in the

abbreviated form Saris, was adopted into the pantheon, though she remained an independent deity, altogether outside the family of Khaldis. It is Saris who masquerades as Semiramis in the early legends of Indo-European Armenia.

The offerings naturally included wine. The vine, which is indigenous in Armenia, was the sacred tree of the country, and the planting of the vine on the part of the king was an especially solemn ceremony. But there is no trace of the sacred stone which played so large a part in the religion of Asia Minor.

The temple resembled those of Assyria. A picture of the front of the temple of Khaldis at Musasir is given in one of the bas-reliefs of the palace of Sargon at Khorsabad. On either side of the door a spear is set upright before the columns which supported the roof, and another spear forms the apex of the slanting roof itself. Right and left of the spears, two shields are suspended from the wall, while in front of the entrance are two large bronze bowls fitted into stands.

Traditions of the old gods survived into Indo-European Armenia. Moses of Khorene tells us how the Armenian king, Ara, 'the Beautiful,' was wooed by the Assyrian queen Semiramis. But Ara refused her offers and eventually Semiramis marched into Armenia at the head of an army to force him to accept her; A fierce battle was fought, in which Ara was slain, and the Assyrian queen flung herself on the corpse in an agony of grief calling upon the gods to restore him to life. And the story went that 'the gods Aralez' did restore him, though the Christian historian declares that this was the invention of the queen.

We hear of the gods Aralez at an earlier date, in the pages of Faustus Byzantinus, who describes the belief of the Armenians in the fourth century A.D., that the brave man who died in battle [185] would be restored by them to life. And at a still earlier date, in the fourth century before our era, Plato knows the name of Er the son of Armenios, who was slain in battle but returned again to life after a sojourn in the world below. It is the old story of Tammuz, the beautiful, beloved of Istar and slain by the boar, for whose sake Istar descended into Hades and brought the dead god back to the living world. The story goes back to the Sumerian age of Babylonia, and in the gods Aralez we must see the Babylonian Arallu, 'the land from whence none return.' In the Assyrian 'history' of Ctesias Ara and Aralez have become Assyrian kings, Arios and Aralios, successors of Zameis, 'the Sun-god,' known also as Ninyas 'the Ninevite,' the son of Semiramis.

Vannic art and culture were derived, like the system of writing, from Assyria, but modified on lines which remind us of Hittite Carchemish and Boghaz Keui. The buildings were mostly of stone, both dressed and undressed, many of the carefully-cut blocks being in contradistinction to Assyrian workmanship of very great size. Bricks were seldom used, and since the only brick construction found at Toprak Kaleh was of crude brick it would appear that they were employed solely in imitation of Babylonia. On the other hand, excavations in the rock were numerous, and Lehmann-Haupt observes that the rounded roof of the entrance to a rock-cut fortress of Rusas at Melazgert throws light on the architectural origin of the rock-cut tombs of the Pontic kings. Houses for the living were excavated in the rock as well as tombs for the dead. The Vannic architect was fond of building his walls with alternate rows of white and black stones after the style of the early Italian churches, and he also ornamented his floors and dados with a sort of mosaic work of small circles consisting of stones of different colours. His stone statuary was a reproduction of that of Assyria.

In metallurgy the people of Van were very expert, as might be expected from the proximity of the mineral wealth. Gold, silver, bronze, copper and iron were all in requisition. The work in bronze was especially excellent; a gryphon with inlaid eyes, discovered at Toprak Kaleh, is, for example, a first-class work of art. But, here again, the inspiration came from Assyria; the solitary human figure of bronze that has been found is as purely Assyrian as is a Vannic reproduction of the god Ashur emerging from the winged solar disk. A bronze candelabrum from Toprak Kaleh is remarkably like those of Etruria and might easily have been discovered in Italy.

Iron objects are common; the iron mines of north-eastern Asia [186] Minor had introduced it into that part of the world at a comparatively early period, and it is possible that the extensive replacement of bronze by iron in Assyria in the reign of Sargon was due to that monarch's northern campaigns.

The pottery of Biainas belongs to the same class as that of early Asia Minor, which we meet with again in the lower strata of Ashur and Nineveh. It is well made, and vases with handles are frequent. The commoner ware was of polished black clay, but there is a considerable amount which closely resembles the pottery found in Phrygia, and is characterized by a fine red glaze reminding us of 'Samian' ware. Wine and oil were kept in large jars with rope-patterns in relief running round their sides and their contents stated in cuneiform characters. Similar jars have been disinterred at Boghaz Keui. In some instances figures of animals in clay were attached to their rims.

The Vannic dress was that of a cold climate. The people wore buskins which reached half-way up their legs, tunics and possibly drawers, and the soldiers protected their heads with helmets, many of which had crests like the helmets of the Greeks or the Hittites of Carchemish. In fact, as far as dress, pottery and art were concerned, there was a general resemblance between the inhabitants of the Armenian plateau and those of Asia Minor throughout the period when the Vannic kingdom rose and fell. (See also pp. 19 sqq.)

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